

*Editor's Note*

We live inside our bodies. They are a vital part of how we experience the world, the source of some of our greatest pleasure and greatest pain. They are constantly changing, sometimes in ways that bring us joy and sometimes in ways that we find distressing. We use our bodies as a way—quite literally—to reach out to others. They are what other people observe of us, and they can become canvases that show our identities, moods, and beliefs, but we can also feel trapped inside them. They both represent and misrepresent who and what we think we are.

In our 2023 Spring/Summer issue, *Body Language*, we invited our authors to explore any and all ideas about the body. Indeed, we may say “the body” in this issue’s title, but we especially wished to acknowledge and embrace that there is no one body, that our bodies, the way we use them and the way they feel, span an astonishing range of experience. Each of us lives in and as a particular body, and each of our bodies has its own stories to tell, and the stories told in these pages, whether as poems, creative nonfiction, or short fiction, demonstrate this idea with grace, wit, insight, honesty, and tenderness.

Here you’ll find the pleasure of a body as Rebecca Baggett invokes the delight of a baby’s first taste of blackberry and K Janeschek extols the way the tongue will “ever taste the song” at the back of a lover’s throat. Riley O’Mearns composes an ode to the power of the gel manicure, while Ellen Kaufman meditates on the satisfaction of slow, steady laps in a swimming pool. The breakdown of the body after death itself becomes an act of solace and transformation in poems by Teresa Scollon, Elizabeth Ann Robertson, and Elaine Johanson.

We knew that an issue focused on the body would solicit work about the toll illness can take on those bodies—and the minds inside them—and yet we were surprised by the many ways our authors approached the subject. Jac-Lynn Stark loves the “dark mystery” of a pleomorphic adenoma, while Aleksia Silverman writes with biting humor about a breast lump getting drunk at Halloween parties and dancing with the speaker in “drop-waist dresses at [a] cousin’s Bar Mitzvah.” In “News from the Interior,” Tammy Armstrong depicts a snow-wracked village spreading out within a woman whose doctors

are unable to diagnose her strange illness, while Anna Tomlinson echoes this frustration in more realistic terms in her poem "Undiagnosis." Anthony Immergluck's two poems show a heartening progression from illness to the beginnings of wellness.

Here too you'll find work that focuses explicitly on women's bodies, sometimes with righteous anger as in Hallie Chametzky's "On Becoming a cherry pit the day of the Dobbs Decision" and Zuleyha Ozturk Lasky's "Cherry," and sometimes with tales of transformation as in Melissa Darcey Hall's teen werewolf story "The Opposite of Instinct." We're also pleased to offer work in which queer, trans, and non-binary bodies take center stage. Allen Means questions why "a body needs disclosure" in "gender/sex (please, sign here)," while Haley Bossé speaks of those who "know what it means to change from one form to the next" in their poem "Consecration."

This issue also contains the work of the winners and honorable mentions of the sixth annual Francine Ringold Awards for New Writers. We created the Ringold Awards to discover and honor the work of emerging poets and fiction writers; to enter, authors must have no more than two previous publications in their genre. In this year's offerings, we are thrilled to share an exciting range of new talent, especially in our two winners, Sam Robison in poetry and Laura Schmitt in fiction. Robison's poems, with their country roads, apple orchards, ghost towns, and dogs and coyotes in unexpected meetings, illuminate a picture of rural life rich with tiny, vibrant detail. In "Runaway Nation," Schmitt uses a plural voice to marvelously capture the constricted frustration of four teenage sisters who long to break free of a town and parents gripped by ultra-vigilance brought on by a local killing. These winners, and the honorable mentions also printed here, are writers to watch.

And so we invite you to give your own body a rest and make your way through our pages. Make a cup of something warm, put on the clothes you feel best in, and curl up in your most comfortable reading spot. The work here will give you plenty to consider, to laugh over, to lament, and to keep thinking about long after you've closed this latest issue of *Nimrod*.